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AUTHOR Valentine, Jerry W.; Harting, Roger D.
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ABSTRACT

The performance-based principal evaluation (PBPE), passed as a section of the 1985 Missouri Educational Reform Act, is a process for professional development of principals through the identification and documentation of job-related expectations and school goals. Additionally, evaluations provide an opportunity to refine those goals and to improve skill and job-related decisionmaking. To determine the degree of implementation and the superintendent's perceptions about the effectiveness of PBPE, one half of the state's approximately 550 superintendents were mailed surveys; usable responses were received from 168 districts. Results indicate that the process used to develop PBPE systems in Missouri districts typically did not include principal involvement, but most evaluation programs were identical to the state PBPE Model. Principals' attitudes regarding PBPE were described as positive; their attitudes were more positive in the districts where principals were involved in developing the PBPE system, in the districts that followed the state model procedures, and in the districts where the evaluators had more training and were perceived as more skilled. The superintendent and other educational leaders from across the state who responded to the PBPE survey indicated that PBPE can impact positively on Missouri education. (KM)

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Prepared by
Jerry W. Valentine
and
Roger D. Harting

University of Missouri
Department of Educational Administration
218 Hill Hall
Columbia, MO 65211

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Performance-Based Principal Evaluation in Missouri:
A Three Year Report

Principals are certainly key actors in an effective school. But how are the principals' abilities evaluated? How do we ensure that they have the important skills to function effectively in their key roles? To what degree is Performance-Based Principal Evaluation (PBPE) being implemented across the state? What impact can PBPE have upon education in Missouri in the next few years? To answer these and other similar questions, a state-wide study of performance-based principal evaluation was conducted in 1986-87.

PBPE Background

Missouri PBPE legislation was passed in the spring of 1985 as a section of the Missouri Educational Reform Act of 1985. In essence, the bill requires districts to evaluate all administrators using performance evaluation processes. To address the legislation, in 1985 the State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Performance Evaluation Committee developed a "PBPE Model," just as the Committee had done for performance-based teacher evaluation in 1984. Then in early 1986 the Committee developed a performance-based evaluation model for superintendents and currently the committee is developing performance evaluation for other central office administrators. This report addresses only the principal evaluation (PBPE) systems in Missouri.

To assist state school leaders in the implementation of PBPE, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Leadership Academy provided nine workshops on PBPE during the 1985-86 school year. Of the approximately 600 educators attending the workshops, the majority were superintendents, the persons most typically responsible for evaluation principals. By informal count, nearly all of the approximately 550 superintendents in the state attended one of the workshops.

Survey Procedures

To gather data for this study, half of the superintendents in the state were mailed a survey which asked for information about the degree to which their district implemented performance-based principal evaluation and their perceptions about the effectiveness of PBPE. Useable surveys were returned by 186 districts (68%). Ninety-four percent of the returned PBPE surveys were completed by superintendents, with the remainder typically completed by assistant superintendents.

The directions given to the respondents were very specific. They were: "Performance-Based Principal Evaluation (PBPE) in our state has been commonly defined as 'a process for the professional development of principals through the identification of job-related expectations and school goals, documentation of skills regarding those expectations and accomplishment of the goals, conferencing about skill level and progress toward goals, opportunity to improve skill and refine goals, and job- related

decision-making'. Please respond to the following questions with that definition in mind."

PBPE Implementation

In the 1985-86 school year, the first year of the legislative mandate, 68% of the districts indicated their school systems used PBPE procedures according to the respondents' interpretation of their system's compliance with the previously stated definition. That was a noticeable increase over the 30% who used PBPE in 1984-85, the year before the legislation. During the 1983-84 school year and in years prior to 1983, 15% of the respondents indicated their districts used PBPE procedures. Apparently, a sizeable number of districts began PBPE after the teacher (PBTE) legislation of 1983, and before the "official" PBPE legislation of 1985. Two probable reasons for the significant increase from 1983-84 to 1984-85 were the awareness of the value of performance evaluation procedures created by the teacher legislation and the fact that many educators believed that the PBTE legislation of 1983 also applied to "principals," a term sometimes considered legally synonymous with the term "teachers" in Missouri statutes. When the legislation of 1985 clarified the issue, the number of PBPE districts more than doubled. Though the 68% for 1985-86 seems low when contrasted to the 97% response for teacher evaluation in the same year, the PBPE implementation pace was well ahead of the PBTE pace of 24% for the 1983-84 year, the first year of the PBTE legislation.

PBPE Development

The process used to develop a PBPE system is important. The State PBPE Model encouraged "grass roots involvement" of persons affected by the system. Eight percent of the districts used a committee structure of principals, teachers and central office administrators to develop their system; 30% used a committee of principals and central office administrators; and, 2% used a committee of principals. In 12% of the districts, the central office staff studied PBPE models and developed a system and in 36%, administrators reviewed the Missouri PBPE Model and recommended that model without formal principal input. In essence, approximately half of the PBPE systems in the state were developed and adopted without significant principal input. Such adoption practices are suspect. Evaluative systems developed "top-down" are seldom effective or long lasting.

Characteristics of the PBPE Systems

The Missouri PBPE Model could accurately be described as a Performance/Outcome-Based Evaluation system. Emphasis is placed in two arenas--skill performance and goal accomplishment for the school. The model reflects the research and literature on effective schooling and effective building administration by stressing the need to demonstrate specific administrative skills and the ability to move a school in a specific positive direction.

Seventy-eight percent of the school districts using PBPE adopted a system essentially identical to the State PBPE Model. Another 19% of the districts used a PBPE system "similar" to the state model, leaving only 3% using systems not similar or identical to the State Model.

PBPE procedures suggested by the state model included scheduled and unscheduled observations with documentation of skill during the observation, transfer of notes to a formative form which identifies the district's criteria, post-observation conferences, job targets for skill improvement, goal setting with feedback about goal progress, and summative reports for the criteria and goals. The most commonly used procedures among Missouri districts with PBPE systems were associated with the performance criteria rather than goal accomplishment. In order of occurrence, those procedures related to performance criteria were unscheduled observations (91%), job targets or other professional improvement plans (86%), summative reports for criteria (84%), post-observation conferences (82%), scheduled observations (80%), notetaking during observations (62%), and transfer of notes to a formative form (57%). Goal statements were identified in 80% of the districts with PBPE, while enroute assessment of goal accomplishment was documented in written form in 56% of the districts and discussed in a formative conference in 74% of the districts. A summative report on goal accomplishment was used in 68% of the PBPE systems. Apparently, numerous districts were requiring goal identification but not following through with assessing the accomplishment of the goals.

Principals are evaluated every year in 88% of the systems using PBPE. A few systems (5%) prepare a summative every other year, fewer use every third year (4%).

Ninety-eight percent of the districts using PBPE procedures did not dismiss or non-renew a principal during the 1985-86 school year for lack of effective performance. Of the few principals across the state who were dismissed, the typical numbers of criteria ratings "below expected performance" were three or four. Fifty-eight percent of all PBPE districts require a job target or improvement plan before a rating of "below expected performance" can be used, 42% do not.

Assistant principals, associate principals, or other building administrators with similar responsibilities were typically evaluated by building principals. Building principals were evaluated by superintendents in 92% of the PBPE districts and by other central office administrators in 7% of the districts.

Principals were "encouraged" to formally seek teacher input about their effectiveness in 42% of the districts and "required" to seek that input in 21% of the systems. In 12% of the systems, the evaluators "sometime" surveyed teachers and used those data for evaluative purposes; in 3% the evaluators were required to survey teachers and use the data. Teacher input was not a part of the process in 22% of the districts.

While 25% of the principals were encouraged to seek parent input during evaluation, only 4% of the principals were required to seek parent input. Fifteen percent of the evaluators could "sometime" survey parents and 2% of the evaluators regularly surveyed parents. However, most systems did not seek parent input in any form (54%).

Evaluator Training

Most evaluators (86%) received some form of training in PBPE. The training was typically one (39%) or two (35%) days. Few evaluators had more than three days of training. The training was most typically provided by a central office administrator (86%). Twelve percent of the evaluators received training from DESE workshops. Given the high percentage of superintendents who attended DESE PBPE workshops during the 1985-86 year, we assume that those superintendents generally inserviced their assistant superintendents and principals in PBPE. Evaluators' skills were rated by respondents on a scale of one to five, with one being "not skilled," three being "moderately skilled," and five being "highly skilled." Half of the respondents described their evaluators' skills as "moderate." Thirty-six percent were rated between moderate and high and 5% were rated "high." Nine percent were rated below moderate. As would be expected, the more days of inservice training, the higher the evaluators' skills were rated.

Principal Attitude

Respondents were asked to describe the attitudes of the principals in their districts regarding PBPE. Two percent said their principals were "very negative," 5% said "somewhat negative," and 19% selected "indifferent." However, most principals were described as "positive" about PBPE, with 55% rated "somewhat positive," and 19% "very positive." Those attitudes were almost identical to the attitudes of teachers about PBTE.

When the attitudes of principals about PBPE were cross referenced with other survey items, the most positive attitudes were in AAA districts. Attitudes were also different among districts based upon the manner in which the district's PBPE system was developed and implemented. For example, attitudes were more positive in districts that used committees to develop their PBPE system and in districts using the "state model." A more negative attitude was apparent in districts where the procedures were not similar to the state model and were developed by the central office administration without principal input. Attitude was more positive in districts where notetaking was used during observations and the notes were transferred to a formative form. Attitudes were more positive in districts where job targets or improvement plans were required before giving a rating "below expected performance." Attitudes of principals were lower in districts requiring teacher input, as contrasted to districts recommending teacher input or not seeking teacher input as a part of the process. And as would be expected, attitudes were higher in districts where the evaluators had PBPE inservice training, and rose according to the amount of inservice training and the skill of the evaluator.

PBPE Impact

Two questions were asked about the "impact" of PBPE on instructional improvement and student achievement. Though the linkage between PBPE and instructional improvement and student achievement is distant and must traverse directly between principal skills, teacher skills, curriculum, school

climate, teacher attitude, etc., many respondents believed the PBPE system was impacting instruction and achievement. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents indicated PBPE would help improve school effectiveness and thus the quality of instruction over the next five years. Ninety-eight percent also said PBPE would help improve student achievement over the next five years. On a five point scale from one being "not helpful" to five being "very helpful," the mean for the question on improving instruction was 3.6. The mean for the question on improving student achievement was 3.5. Clearly, the respondents believe that PBPE can make a difference in educational effectiveness.

PBPE Summary

PBPE is currently used in most school systems in Missouri. Though not used as extensively as PBTE, it has thus far been implemented at a quicker pace than was PBTE. The process used to develop the PBPE systems in Missouri districts typically did not include principal involvement, but most PBPE systems were identical to the State PBPE Model. Documentation of skills and goals during the formative phases were the procedural steps most often not included in district PBPE systems. Most PBPE evaluators received training in PBPE. Principals attitudes about PBPE were generally described as positive. Their attitudes were more positive in districts where principals were involved in developing the PBPE system, in districts which followed the "State Model" procedures, and in districts where the evaluators had more training and were perceived as more skilled. The superintendents and other educational leaders from across the state who responded to the PBPE survey indicated that PBPE can impact positively on Missouri education.

A Perspective

From this state-wide study of PBPE and a similar PBTE study, it is apparent that PBPE and PBTE can make a difference in instructional effectiveness, school effectiveness and student learning. Responses from educational leaders across the state indicate that PBPE and PBTE were steps in the right direction and can impact positively if implemented correctly by skilled evaluators who understand and support the philosophy of performance evaluation being a means toward improvement of all personnel, not a means for the dismissal of a few. From a legislative mandate in 1983, Missouri students can benefit if we, the teachers and administrators, consciously work together to implement effective PBPE and PBTE systems.